

118TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

**S.** \_\_\_\_\_

To direct the Comptroller General of the United States to conduct a study to evaluate the activities of sister city partnerships operating within the United States, and for other purposes.

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mrs. BLACKBURN introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on \_\_\_\_\_

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**A BILL**

To direct the Comptroller General of the United States to conduct a study to evaluate the activities of sister city partnerships operating within the United States, and for other purposes.

1        *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2        *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3        **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4        This Act may be cited as the “Sister City Trans-  
5        parency Act”.

6        **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

7        In this Act:

1           (1) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMIT-  
2           TEES.—The term “appropriate congressional com-  
3           mittees” means—

4                   (A) the Committee on Foreign Relations of  
5           the Senate;

6                   (B) the Committee on Health, Education,  
7           Labor, and Pensions of the Senate;

8                   (C) the Committee on Armed Services of  
9           the Senate;

10                  (D) the Committee on Foreign Affairs of  
11           the House of Representatives;

12                  (E) the Committee on Education and  
13           Labor of the House of Representatives; and

14                  (F) the Committee on Armed Services of  
15           the House of Representatives.

16           (2) FOREIGN COMMUNITY.—The term “foreign  
17           community” means any subnational unit of govern-  
18           ment outside of the United States.

19           (3) SISTER CITY PARTNERSHIP.—The term  
20           “sister city partnership” means a formal agreement  
21           between a United States community and a foreign  
22           community that—

23                   (A) is recognized by Sister Cities Inter-  
24           national; and

25                   (B) is operating within the United States.

1           (4) UNITED STATES COMMUNITY.—The term  
2           “United States community” means a State, county,  
3           city, or other unit of local government in the United  
4           States.

5 **SEC. 3. STUDY OF SISTER CITY PARTNERSHIPS OPERATING**  
6                           **WITHIN THE UNITED STATES INVOLVING**  
7                           **FOREIGN COMMUNITIES IN COUNTRIES WITH**  
8                           **SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC SECTOR CORRUPTION.**

9           (a) IN GENERAL.—The Comptroller General of the  
10          United States shall conduct a study of the activities of  
11          sister city partnerships involving foreign communities in  
12          countries receiving a score of 45 or less on Transparency  
13          International’s 2019 Corruption Perceptions Index.

14          (b) ELEMENTS OF THE STUDY.—The study con-  
15          ducted under subsection (a) shall—

16                 (1) identify—

17                         (A) the criteria by which foreign commu-  
18                         nities identify United States communities as  
19                         candidates for sister city partnerships, including  
20                         themes with respect to the prominent economic  
21                         activities and demographics of such United  
22                         States communities;

23                         (B) the activities conducted within sister  
24                         city partnerships;

1 (C) the economic and educational outcomes  
2 of such activities;

3 (D) the types of information that sister  
4 city partnerships make publicly available, in-  
5 cluding information relating to contracts and  
6 activities;

7 (E) the means by which United States  
8 communities safeguard freedom of expression  
9 within sister city partnerships; and

10 (F) the oversight practices that United  
11 States communities implement to mitigate the  
12 risks of foreign espionage and economic coer-  
13 cion within sister city partnerships;

14 (2) assess—

15 (A) the extent to which United States com-  
16 munities ensure transparency regarding sister  
17 city partnership contracts and activities;

18 (B) the extent to which sister city partner-  
19 ships involve economic arrangements that make  
20 United States communities vulnerable to malign  
21 market practices;

22 (C) the extent to which sister city partner-  
23 ships involve educational arrangements that di-  
24 minish the freedom of expression;

1 (D) the extent to which sister city partner-  
2 ships allow foreign nationals to access local  
3 commercial, educational, and political institu-  
4 tions;

5 (E) the extent to which foreign commu-  
6 nities could use sister city partnerships to real-  
7 ize strategic objectives that do not conduce to  
8 the economic and national security interests of  
9 the United States;

10 (F) the extent to which sister city partner-  
11 ships could enable or otherwise contribute to  
12 foreign communities' malign activities globally,  
13 including activities relating to human rights  
14 abuses and academic and industrial espionage;  
15 and

16 (G) the extent to which United States com-  
17 munities seek to mitigate foreign nationals' po-  
18 tentially inappropriate use of visa programs to  
19 participate in activities relating to sister city  
20 partnerships; and

21 (3) review—

22 (A) the range of activities conducted within  
23 sister city partnerships, including activities re-  
24 lating to cultural exchange and economic devel-  
25 opment;

1 (B) how such activities differ between sis-  
2 ter city partnerships; and

3 (C) best practices to ensure transparency  
4 regarding sister city partnerships' agreements,  
5 activities, and employees.

6 (c) REPORT.—

7 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 6 months  
8 after initiating the study required under subsection  
9 (a), the Comptroller General shall submit a report to  
10 the appropriate congressional committees that con-  
11 tains the results of such study, including the find-  
12 ings, conclusions, and recommendations (if any) of  
13 the study.

14 (2) FORM.—The report required under para-  
15 graph (1) may include a classified annex, if nec-  
16 essary.